

Lee Academy Graduation  
Friday, May 18, 2001  
7:00 p.m.  
Clarksdale Civic Auditorium

### **Commencement Address**

- I am aware of the real reason you are here today
  - You are here to get your hard thought, privileged piece of paper.
  
- (Story about graduation speaker not being intimidated by the time, when he started his speech.)
  
- How would you like to be remembered?
  - As a wealthy individual?
  - With a great degree of notoriety?
  
- You are capable of achieving all of these and more.
  
- Doesn't matter which profession you accept.
  - How you perform is what matters.
  - How, not what, you do, defines you.
  - We all know teachers or professionals who stand out.
  
- Becoming a leader in your community
  - Your degree makes you capable.
  - Leadership – not defined by titles or positions.
  - The stand/action you take, defines you and your impact on your community.
  
- Often we are concerned about our image in the state and what others outside our borders think of us
  - Be more concerned about our image of ourselves.

- Being 48<sup>th</sup>, 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup>, we sometimes tend to think it's true.
  - Our perception transcends our borders.
- The State of Mississippi should not accept mediocrity; we should not accept the status quo.
  - We should accept unparalleled opportunities for unparalleled progress.
  - We should not accept the excuse that's "the way it has always been."
  - Change takes leadership, but it also takes people.
- We were told that we could not raise teacher pay.
  - Don't waste your time; it cannot be done.
  - It has happened.
- Time magazine said no state has an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom.
  - Mississippi is over halfway to our goal of being the 1<sup>st</sup> state in the nation to accomplish this by 2002.
- We must "stretch" ourselves.
- Move to do more than ever before
- Use skill, talent, energy and drive you have to make a difference in your community.
- How do you want to be remembered?
- (Waverly W. Ray Story)
- The manner and way you perform will influence others.